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Ontario Department of Education

MIDSUMMER DEPARTMENTAL
EXAMINATIONS FOR 1916

Reports of Departmental and
Matriculation Associate
Examiners

for 1915

RE

The Character of the Candidates' Answers

AND

The Teaching of the Subjects in the Schools

PRINTED BY ORDER OF
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO



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Departmental Examinations

Each year after the answer papers at the Departmental examinations have been read by the Associate Examiners, each Section reports to the Minister any criticisms it has to offer of the question papers, the conduct of the examinations, and the teaching as judged by the candidates' answers. The criticisms that directly affect the Department the Minister has found to be useful, and this year he begins in this circular the publication of a summary of the chief criticisms of the answer papers as, in his judgment, are also likely to prove useful to the teachers.

In most departments the answering appears to be improving from year to year; but, as the criticisms show, there is room for further improvement. Generally speaking, under present conditions the question papers are difficult enough, and manifestly any raising of their standard should be gradual and commensurate with the progress of the schools. Present conditions, however, will justify the Minister in directing, as he intends, the Associate Examiners to adopt next summer a higher standard in estimating the values of the answers. With the exception of the Public and Separate School Diploma and the High School Entrance examinations, all the Departmental academic examinations are held to test the fitness of the candidates for admission to the Professional Schools for teachers. The evidence in the hands of the Minister demonstrates clearly the necessity for securing hereafter on the part of our teachers before they enter these schools a more accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the prescribed subjects than many of them have hitherto possessed.

As to the bonus subjects: It must be clearly understood that no bonus subject may be taken up in any school unless adequate provision is made for the prescribed subjects of the school courses taken up therein, and that, as far as practicable, the examinations in the different co-ordinate bonus subjects will be equalized in difficulty, and, as provided by the Regulations, each paper will assume that the work prescribed for the course therefor has been duly and thoroughly covered.

Reports of Associate Examiners re Character of Candidates' Answers and the Teaching of the Subjects in the Schools, 1915

DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS

THE LOWER SCHOOL

Art: In many of the schools the answers of the candidates showed a lack of proper teaching in the following particulars:—

- (1) In good pencil technique to indicate tone, shade and shadow.
- (2) In freehand perspective, as in the foreshortening of circles and curves in the plate of question 1, and in the coal scuttle or watering can of question 2.
- (3) In the conventionalization of simple forms from nature, as required for the design on cup and saucer in question 3.
- (4) In mixing and blending water-colours so as to get away from positive colours to the reduced colours required in the paintings of such a group as was submitted for question 1.
- (5) In neat and uniform simple lettering, as for question 4.
- (6) In an appreciation of the aesthetic or structural elements of a picture—the methods the artist has employed to tell his story.
- (7) In the explanation of necessary terms in art, as, “unit of design,” “flat outline,” “decorative spot,” “centre of interest.”

It would appear from the answers that many candidates were handicapped through their own carelessness or through a failure on the part of the teacher to inform them to take proper material for the examination, for example:

- (1) Compasses, ruler, etc., for possible questions in design.
- (2) Good water-colours and a good pencil.

Notwithstanding the preceding criticisms, it is proper to add that there is a marked improvement in the teaching of Art as is shown by the high character of the work at some centres.

In the judgment of the Section the minimum time per week for the teaching of Art in the second year of the Lower School should be one and one-half hours.

History: A decided improvement in the character of the candidates' answers was noticeable this year. Quite a large number, however, have not yet reached the stage of clear and definite knowledge. Some of them write very diffusely; one envelope contained twenty-three pages of written matter. The answers to the question about the present war were remarkably good.

Elementary Science—Biology:

1. *Fruits:* The answers were much better than those given to a similar question on the paper of 1913; but in many cases, even yet, the relation of fruit structure to the organs of the flower is not clearly understood. The adaptations for the dispersal of fleshy fruits have not been emphasized.

2. *Ferns and Flowers*: The fern was generally selected for description in preference to a flower. The cohesion and adhesion of the floral organs do not seem to have received much attention.
3. *Plant Physiology*: The question on this subject was fairly well answered, but in certain schools, essentially defective experiments have been taught in illustration of transpiration and hydrotropism.
4. *The Frog*: Very many inaccurate, indefinite answers were given, showing that actual, careful observation of stages in life history has not been made.
5. *Mammals*: The answers on "feet" were generally good, while those on "teeth" were few and poor.
6. *Turtle, Crayfish and Woodlouse*: The part of the question relating to classification was poorly answered. This important part of the work is not receiving the attention it deserves.
7. **Chemistry and Physics**: *The Air*: In general, the answers were fairly good except in Part (c). The relation of the air constituents to plant life and animal life has not been made sufficiently definite.
8. *Sound*: Part (a) was well answered but in Part (b) "loudness" and "pitch" were too often confused.
Light: The "Colour" question and the "Reflection" question were not answered at all well.
9. *General*: Parts (i), (ii), and (iv) were fairly well answered, but (iii) on the methods of magnetizing needles does not seem to have been taught.

Spelling: The Section is of the opinion that in all schools more time should be given to dictation rather than to the spelling of lists of words.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

English Literature: The candidates' answers showed that many teachers of English do not seem to be aware of the importance that is attached to the following in the examinations in English Literature:—

- (1) The necessity for clearness and conciseness of expression.
- (2) The deduction of one mark for each misspelt word and for each instance of incorrect English.
- (3) The avoidance of slang expressions and abbreviations.
- (4) Accuracy and conciseness in locating passages.
- (5) The unnecessary copying of questions from the question paper.
- (6) The careful arrangement, numbering, and spacing of the answers.
- (7) The necessity in memory work of correct lining, spelling and punctuation.

Latin: (1) The teaching of Prose Composition seems to be improving. This year higher marks were made by many candidates in the Prose than in the Authors.

(2) The pupils are still very weak in translation. Here there is great room for improvement throughout the Province. Evidently teachers accept very poor English as a translation of the Caesar.

- (3) The translation of the Virgil appeared to have been memorized or almost so; but the answers to many questions on the passages from Virgil were usually bad. In fact it was in connection with the questions on the passages from Virgil (and from Caesar also) that most mistakes were made. The pupils seem to have prepared an English translation of the Virgil and nothing more; they have no knowledge of the grammar and syntax of the passages.
- (4) There is still a great lack of accuracy in the candidates' knowledge of the declensions and conjugations.

English Composition : (1) Teachers of Composition should pay more attention to punctuation.

(2) The form of the pupils' compositions should be stressed. Many compositions lacked sentence spacing and indentation of paragraphs, a proper wording of the plan, and general neatness.

(3) Teachers of Composition should encourage the pupils to read more widely from good current magazines as well as from standard works of Literature.

Physics : The character of the answer papers showed that many of the pupils are not performing the experiments. This is probably due to the schools attempting to cover the whole course in one year rather than in two years as intended by the Department. As a result Physics has become a "plucking subject" in recent years.

British and Canadian History : On the whole the answers of the candidates did not appear to be so satisfactory as those of last year; many were vague and indefinite, and showed great confusion of thought.

In the answers to question 1, there was great lack of accuracy in the locating of the places named. There seemed also to be a great lack of definite knowledge of the most essential facts of Canadian History.

The Section thinks that the defects in the candidates' answers were due not so much to defective teaching as to the inadequate time given to the subject. There appears to be good ground for believing that in many schools History does not receive the attention it deserves in view of its great importance. Evidently, in some schools, insufficient time is given on the time-table, while in most schools the students have so much home-work in other subjects that they have no time for preparation of History.

Art : The answers indicate that many candidates are not familiar with the principal historic ornaments. One candidate stated on his answer paper that he never had the acanthus leaf. The work in design and water-colours is greatly improved. Pencil work is incomplete, weak in shading and in the representation of values. Light and shade appears to be only slightly taught.

There have been more failures due to bad freehand work in pencil than in the other modes of expression. The lowest marks were on pencil work. Ignorance of stencil designs and practical stencil patterns was shown in most papers although these subjects are required in the course.

Geometry : More attention should be paid to:

- (1) Accurate work in Geometrical Drawings, and—
- (2) Logical sequence in the demonstration of theorems.

THE UPPER SCHOOL

Latin : The understanding of the meaning was uniformly good, and the work was well covered. Translations, especially of Cicero, were too literal. The Section, while recognizing the necessity for a close understanding of the Latin construction, recommends that in the Upper School, at any rate, a freer and more idiomatic English be insisted upon, so that a good translation of Cicero and of Caesar will mean a good model of English Composition.

Much time has evidently been given by the teachers to Grammar and Parsing. The answers of the candidates showed careful preparation, but the questions were, in the opinion of the Section, rather elementary.

In the Composition the candidates show careful preparation, and there is no doubt that a good foundation is being laid, but here also the Section objects to the elementary character of the sentences.

French and German : In view of the importance of securing a high standard of English in the translations the attention of the teachers of modern languages should be directed to the necessity of impressing on their students the value of the use of clear and grammatical English.

Trigonometry : While there seems to be an improvement in the power of the candidate to use books of tables, there is a lack of systematic arrangement of the logarithmic work in the solutions of triangles and problems, and this lack of system is, at least, a contributory cause of many of the inaccuracies that occur.

Geometry : Many candidates seem to be unable to distinguish between the coordinates of a fixed point and the current coordinates of a locus.

English : The Section is of the opinion that pupils should be trained to give greater attention to conciseness and definiteness of expression in their answers to the questions in English Literature. The planning of answers, proper spacing on the page, and other points of form should also be emphasized.

MATRICULATION EXAMINATIONS

By request of the Matriculation Board, the Minister includes in this circular a supplementary summary from some of the reports of the Matriculation Associate Examiners.

Pass Geometry : More attention should be given to exact definition ;

- (1) Few candidates knew the requirements for simple figures.
- (2) Many said that if two angles of a triangle, were equal, therefore, the triangle is isosceles, and therefore two sides are equal.
- (3) A large number of candidates confused the terms "rectangle" and "rectilineal figure."

While the reason for every statement should be given, it is not required in modern Geometry that pupils should refer to propositions by number or page.

The Section strongly recommends careful lettering of diagrams, capitals being used.

The impression of the Section is that Geometry is not receiving the time and attention that its importance deserves.

Pass Physics: The drawings were the only feature of the work requiring criticism. They were often carelessly and inaccurately made; moreover, the answers were not illustrated by drawings as often as they should be.

Pass Chemistry: The answer papers at the examination in Chemistry indicate defects in the teaching.

- (1) The candidates showed a lack of power to apply and coordinate knowledge they possess and also a lack of initiative—qualities that the study of Chemistry is eminently suited to develop.
- (2) The answers to question 3, indicated a lack of ability to give proper quantitative interpretation to formulæ and equations. As this is a matter of great importance in Chemistry, failure to emphasize it is a serious defect in the teaching.

Pass Classics: (1) Candidates in Greek did not adhere to the terminology used in the authorized text-book. For instance, the terms "first and second conditional" frequently appeared on answer papers to describe future conditional sentences. The terms "strong" and "weak" aorist also appeared. These terms should not be used, as they lead to confusion.

- (2) In translating Caesar, candidates were not consistent in the use of tenses, changing the sequence in successive sentences and at times even in the same sentence.
- (3) Candidates failed in many cases to express themselves in idiomatic English.
- (4) In rendering individual words candidates were frequently inaccurate.
- (5) Candidates often failed to identify and parse fully; they gave only partial answers.
- (6) Many candidates did not know how to indicate properly the accent on a word.

Honour History : Considerable difference was evidenced amongst the candidates. There are a few who have no grasp of History and it is absurd for such candidates to attempt an Honour paper at all. Some few, indeed, failed to make a pass. Such candidates should write on pass papers and should be so advised by their teachers.

There were many good candidates and the power and form of the answering were generally commendable. A few, indeed, in Modern History were of exceptional merit. Yet only six candidates received First Class Honours out of sixty-seven, while only four out of sixty-eight received First Class in Mediaeval History.

The teaching of the subject is fair, but it is clear in many cases that candidates are not taught to meet squarely the question on the paper; they attempt to answer it with a mass of, often, incongruous facts. Many write too diffusely.

Department of Education,

November, 1915.
